

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, MASS, MI, US
SUBJECT: MALAWI, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY SUPPORTING ASSISTANCE
(SSA)

REF: STATE 301061 B. STATE 301108

1. OUR DILEMMA IS CLEAR AND APPRECIATE HAVING OPPORTUNITY
TO GIVE OUR VIEWS AND REVISE AND CLEAR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT.

2. FIRSTLY, WE FEEL IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO TRY TO AVOID
THE PROBLEM BY SEPARATING MALAWI FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR PURPOSES
OF AID AUTHORIZATION THIS YEAR. FROM WHERE WE SIT WE DO NOT FEEL
MALAWI IS ALL THAT DIFFERENT WITH RESPECT TO ITS HUMAN RIGHTS
SITUATION THAN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES IN THIS AREA. NOT ONLY MIGHT
SEPARATION MERELY HIGHLIGHT THE PROBLEM AS SOME OF YOU SUGGEST,
BUT WE BELIEVE IT COULD BE IMPORTANT TO OUR INTEREST IN THE FUTURE
THAT MALAWI BE ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE PROPOSED SPECIAL
REQUIREMENTS FUND. ALTHOUGH MALAWI HAS REMAINED SUCCESSFULLY
ALOOF FROM AND RELATIVELY UNAFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS TO THE SOUTH,
THIS SITUATION COULD CERTAINLY CHANGE IN THE MONTHS AHEAD AND IN SUCH
A WAY THAT WE MIGHT WELL WANT TO RESPOND POSITIVELY. FOR OVER A
YEAR NOW WE HAVE BEEN FENDING OFF A MODEST ARMY REQUEST FOR STAFF
TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES FOR ONE OFFICER AT GOM EXPENSE.
THE ARMY HERE IS A PROFESSIONAL, APOLITICAL FORCE WHICH COULD
PLAY A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN A POST-BANDA ERA. THE
MOST ABLE AND SOPHISTICATED OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS, PRESENTLY
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NO. 3 IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS CLEARLY IMPLIED

TO US DISTRESS AND REGRET AT THE TREATMENT METED OUT TO THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. MOREOVER, MUCH AS WE VALUE AND SUPPORT THE BUNDA PROJECT WHICH FULLY MEETS CONGRESSIONAL CRITERIA FOR AID IN THIS AREA, WE QUESTION A TACTIC OF TRYING TO PROTECT IT BY THE PROPOSAL SUGGESTED.

3. SECONDLY, WE ARE NO LONGER CONVINCED THAT CONGRESSIONAL CRITICISM OF MALAWI'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WOULD BE WITHOUT EFFECT ON PRESIDENT BANDA. THE RECENT UPROAR AND CRITICISM IN GREAT BRITAIN OVER HIS ARBITRARY AND UNWARRANTED EXPULSION OF THE GOAN COMMUNIZY (A DECISION TAKEN ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF HIS NOW DETAINED SECURITY CHIEF) WE THINK HAS GIVEN HIM SOME PAUSE DESPITE OUTWARD BLUSTER. HE MIGHT WELL CALL ME IN FOR A LECTURE AND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS MIGHT SUFFER FOR A SHORT TIME OUT IN POINT OF FACT HE HAS NO PLACE ELSE TO TURN EXCEPT TO THE WEST. ANY SIGNIFICANT MOVE AWAY FROM THIS ALLEGIANCE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BRING ABOUT HIS EVENTUAL DOWNFALL AND REPLACEMENT, IN OUR OPINION.

4. THIRDLY, WE HOPE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO BRING OUT AND STRESS TO THE CONGRESS, CONCOMITANT WITH THE PRESENTATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, THE MANY POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE BANDA REGIME, BOTH IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WITH REGARD TO CONCERN FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE ORDINARY CITIZEN. TO ISSUSTRATE, THERE IS VERY LITTLE GRAFT AND CORRUPTION AMONG PUBLIC OFFICIALS, AID MONIES ARE CAREFULLY AND HONESTLY SPENT, STRESS IS PLACED ON HARD WORK AND EFFICIENCY AND CONSTANT EMPHASIS IS GIVEN TO ENDING TRIBALISM AND WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF ALL. ALW AND ORDER ARE MAINTAINED WITHOUT UNDUE HARSHNESS AND THE POLICE ARE EXHORTED TO PROTECT AND BE HELPFUL TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ORDINARY POLICEMAN AND THE CITIZENRY ARE VERY GOOD. IN POINT OF FACT, THE INCIDENCE OF COMMON CRIME IS EXTREMELY LOW BY OUR STANDARDS. THE ECONOMY FUNCTIONS WELL AND IN CONTRAST TO ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA, FOR EXAMPLE, STORES ARE WELL-STOCKED AND PUBLIC SERVICES ARE EFFICIENTLY OPERATED AND STEADILY EXPANDED. WE WOULD SUPPOSE, TOO, THAT THE MAJORITY OF CONGRESSMEN WOULD NOTE POSITIVELY THE FACT THAT THE GOM IS ANTI-COMMUNIST, ANTI-MARXIST AND SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE HAS HAD VERY FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND HAS SUPPORTED OUR CAUSES IN THE UN PROBABLY MORE THAN ANY OTHER BLACK AFRICAN COUNTRY. PRESIDENT BANDA IS A DESPOT IN THE MANNER AND STYLE OF A TRADITIONAL,

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POWERFUL AFRICAN CHIEF COMPLETE WITH SPOKESMAN AND FLY WHISK BUT HE IS WIDELY POPULAR AMONG THE COMMON FOLKS AND IN OUR OPINION IF THERE WERE NOW A FREE ELECTION IN MALAWI HE WOULD GET AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE VOTE.

5. FOURTHLY, WE ASSUME MALAWI WILL BE JUDGED IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE SINGLED OUT AS BEING TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM MOST OTHER BLACK AFRICAN COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO

THOSE HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH WE IN THE U.S. UNDERSTAND, DEFEND AND ADVOCATE. THE SITUATION HERE IS CLEARLY NOT TO OUR LIKING, BUT WE FIND THE DRAFT REPORT OVERLY COLORED AND INCORRECT WITH REGARD TO SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS. BY SEPARATE CABLE WE ARE SENDING IN OUR REVISED DRAFT WITH COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS. WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED THE RECENT DETENTION OF THE SINISTER CHIEF OF THE POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH, GWEDE, AND THE MINISTER-SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY, MUWALO, WHO APPARENTLY PROTECTED AND ENCOURAGED GWEDE IN HIS EXCESSES. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED (AND WE THINK CORRECTLY) BOTH FED FALSE INFORMATION TO PRESIDENT BANDA AND PLAYED ON HIS PARANOIA, WHICH RESULTED IN HUNDREDS OF POLITICAL ARRESTS. WE HAVE PALPABLY NOTED THE FEELING OF RELIEF AMONG MALAWI CIVIL SERVANTS AND OTHER EDUCATED PERSONS FOLLOWING THE SEIZURE OF THESE MEN. LAST WEEK MANY OF THESE POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE RELEASED ALTHOUGH THE GOM HAS MADE NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS. FROM THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND MALAWIAN SOURCES WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME 368 PERSONS WERE REPORTEDLY FREED WITH MORE TO FOLLOW, BUT THIS FIGURE HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED AS YET. PRESUMABLY IF CORRECT, AND EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT IT IS, THIS SHOULD CARRY SOME WEIGHT WITH THE CONGRESS AS DID PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S RECENT SIMILAR ACTION IN CHILE. WITH REGARD TO CHARGES OF TORTURE AND BRUTAL TREATMENT OF POLITICAL DETAINEES, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT IT IS PERMITTED OR CONDONED. NEITHER HAS THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION WHICH HAS A WIDE RANGE OF SOURCES, INCLUDING THE COMMISSIONER OF PRISONS. WE ARE NOT SAYING IT NEVER HAPPENS BUT WE ARE REASONABLY CERTAIN IT IS NOT AN INSTITUTIONALIZED REGULAR OCCURRENCE. DESPITE A CONSTANT AND CONSCIENTIOUS EFFORT (MOSTLY THROUGH AMERICAN MISSIONARIES) WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM A SINGLE ONE OF THE MANY ATROCITY STORIES CARRIED IN THE JW PUBLICATIONS. NEITHER HAS THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION. CERTAINLY WITNESSES HAVE BEEN TREATED HARSHLY AND PRESIDENT BANDA HAS ENCOURAGED SUCH TREATMENT, BUT WE CAN ONLY NOTE THAT WE HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEIR EXTREME STORIES. ADMITTEDLY, UNDER CONDITIONS

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PREVAILING NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE AN IMPARTIAL AND THOROUGH INVESTIGATION AND AGAIN WE ARE NOT ASSERTING THAT NO ATROCITIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE.

6. IN SUM, WHILE WE FULLY AGREE THE REGIME HAS BEEN REPRESSIVE, AND WE ARE NOT TRYING TO EXCUSE OR EXPLAIN AWAY THE REPRESSIVE FEATURES, TAKEN IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT THE EXCESSES HAVE NOT BEEN UNIQUE AND THEY CAN AND SHOULD BE ASSESSED IN A BROADER CONTEXT PERMITTING BALANCING BY THE MANY POSITIVE FEATURES MENTIONED IN PARA 4. FURTHERMORE, THE BUNDA PROJECT IS A SOUND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WHICH WE STRONGLY SUPPORT, AND WHICH WE INTEND TO USE AS A MEASURE FOR FUTURE ASSISTANCE. THUS, WHILE WE DO WISH TO FACE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION SQUARELY, WE CERTAINLY BELIEVE IT WOULD BE AN ERROR TO DISCONTINUE FUNDING BUNDA BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD--SUCH ACTION WOULD GAIN US NOTHING IN THE

PRESENT AND MOST CERTAINLY WOULD PREJUDICE OUR FUTURE JUST AT A
TIME WHEN PROSPECTS SEEM BRIGHTER.
STEVENSON

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